

## Bat

(*Hipposideros armiger*; Hindi—Chamgadar)

Technically speaking, a flying fox is also a bat. In case of a bat, the arms greatly exceed the legs in development; the breast bone is furnished with a keel; however, it is not as much as compared to a bird's breast keel. On an average, bats fly much better than most birds. Probably, this is facilitated by the wing membrane which is carried down as it is from the lower finger to ankle; thus enabling a far more effective stroke.

Bats are well distributed all over the Himalaya. The following variety is peculiar to the Himalayan chain alone:

**Great Himalayan Leaf Nosed Bat**—It is the largest Indian insectivorous bat with a forearm of about 8 cm in males. Ears are moderately developed with concave outer and convex inner margins. Nose-leaf is complicated, with the lower portion shield shaped having four accessory lobes on each side; the upper portion is better developed in males than females. The fur is of various shades of brown. Generally feed on beetles, cycads etc.

## Elephant

(*Elephas maximus*; Hindi—Hathi)

Very well distributed in the lower hills of the Himalaya. Its western most limit being the jungles of Dehra Dun. Earlier elephant herds used to cross the river Yamuna into Himachal Pradesh but this has stopped and now in the Himalaya, the elephant does not occur to the west of the river Yamuna.

It is the largest of living land animals. Description of the elephant's body is too well known to be repeated here. Colour of the skin is slaty. They inhabit high grass as well as forest. They feed on grass, leaves, twigs, bark, fruit etc. Elephants drink at least twice each day; the lower portion of the trunk is filled with water which is then squirted into the mouth. One elephant needs over 200 kg of food each day. The female and young elephants are gregarious and roam around in small herds. The male often tends to be solitary in habit. Very often, old bulls tend to become dangerous and notorious, acquiring the name "rogues". Some experts are of the opinion that such individuals have been expelled from

the herd (Though this may not be always correct). While a herd is feeding, one individual will act as a guard to warn the others of eminent danger. By and large, elephants are fond of bathing as well as wallowing, particularly during the hot season. It is in the habit of squirting water over itself. An elephant likes shade and very often will take up dust and squirt over its back, when exposed to the sun.

Just after birth, the calf is only about 1 mt long, with a 20.25 cm long trunk. It begins to devour grass when it is about 18 to 22 months old. Off-spring are usually born from September to November. Young ones do not mature till they attain the age of about 25 years. The adult male becomes periodically mad and is then very dangerous. During this period, there is an exudation from small holes on the temples.

In general, the elephant is wary of venturing onto soft ground, as it faces the danger of being bogged down. It is able to swim across water, though its speed while swimming is pretty slow. On the ground it trots or surges when in a hurry.

Elephant herds migrate from one part of the Himalayan foothills to another. Herds have been known to migrate from eastern Nepal right upto Lacchiwala forest of Dehra Dun and return back later on. With the passage of time and as a result of the numerous river valley projects that have come up in the area, migration has become considerably limited in extent. However, even today elephant herds are known to migrate from eastern Nepal, westwards to the forests of Lansdowne division, U.P., east of the river Ganga. Now such herds seldom cross the river Ganga at Haridwar.

## Rhinceros

(*Rhinceros unicornis*; Hindi—Gairda)

In the Himalaya, the Indian one-horned rhinceros is found in the lower hills of Arunachal Pradesh, eastern Nepal etc. During the Moghul period, there is a record of its having occurred in parts of U.P. hills too.

The rhinceros is about 1.75 mts high at shoulder, and the horn is about 20 cm in length. The skin is very strongly

tubercled and thrown into a number of heavy folds, forming collars around the throat and dewlap in front of the chest. The skin is slate coloured. It lives in grassy jungles, where the height of vegetation affords protection and security from detection. It feeds on grass, leaves, buds etc. A short grunt is generally emitted by it. It forms piles of dung by depositing it on the same spot.

Rhinoceros are fond of wallowing in water, wet mud or even sand, particularly during the hot season. The gestation period varies from 16½ to 16¾ months. Young ones roam with their mother for a considerable period of time. Tigers are known to relish the meat of newly born rhinos. Hence, they are protected by their mothers and hide in the grass, whenever, a tiger is lurking nearby. Gee (1964) narrated the following story about this feature—"The other occasion was when I was on one elephant, followed by two other elephants spaced apart and some distance behind. I was looking for rhino in thick grassy country, and finally saw one with its back towards me. As my elephant approached within a fairly noisy close distance, I photographed it and was surprised that it did not turn in my direction or at least glance in my direction.

So, I told the mahout to take the elephant closer. The rhino then wheeled quickly round and charged—and on its way towards me was joined by her newly-born calf which had been hidden in the grass.....

At that moment, the other two elephants came up, and their mahouts shouted to us that there was a tiger prowling around, for their elephants had made that unmistakable metallic sound with the tips of their trunks on the ground, revealing the presence of a tiger.

That explained the rhinos peculiar behaviour, why it was facing the other way without looking round at me, and why the calf had been hidden. A tiger was after the calf, for a baby rhino (or baby elephant) is a great delicacy to a tiger".

#### Kiang

(*Equus hemionus*; Tibetan Kiang, Dzightai)

Also known as the Tibetan wild ass, this animal inhabits the cold deserts of the trans Himalayan zone—Ladakh, Lahul

etc. In general, its form resembles a mule with ears longer than that of a horse. Colour is chestnut, varying to sandy grey legs; white underparts and a dark brown strip along the back. The Kiang develops a thick coat during winters.

It frequents the dry open deserts beyond the main Himalayan range; often climbing up the hills, where like the mule, it is a fine climber. It feeds on grass and other herbs. It can live on very little food and water for days together. The Kiang can run at incredibly fast speeds. It has been estimated that they can far outrun the fastest of racing horses with little effort.

#### Yak

(*Bos grunniens*; Hindi—Yak, Bubul)

This is another animal which inhabits the trans Himalayan regions of Ladakh, Lahul, Spiti etc. It is a massive short statured animal with a thick coat. The shoulder height of a full grown bull is about 2 mts. Horns have a forward as well as an upward inclination. These animals are easily domesticated and are used as a beast of burden at higher altitudes.

Wild yaks thrive in the bleakest conditions and may ascend upto 7000 mts during the summers. Except during the mating season (which is in winter) bulls are loners or roam about in small parties. However, the cows and young ones form very large herds, often of over 50; and ascend up the mountain slopes during the summer months. They feed on alpine and sub-alpine vegetation near the snow line.

#### Gaur

(*Bos gaurus*; Hindi—Gaur, Gaugai)

In the Himalaya, this animal is found only in the foothill tract of Arunachal Pradesh. It does not ascend higher up onto the lower hills. It is an fox-like animal, characterised by white coloured socks. It feeds on grass, buds, leaves etc.

#### Antelopes

A number of antelopes occur in the Himalaya. They have been discussed below:

(a) Chiru (*Pantholops hodgsoni*; Nepalese—Chiru). This animal is generally found in parts of Ladakh, north Garhwal,

HIMALAYAN  
WILD LIFE  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

An Introduction

S.S. NEGI

pp. [i-2), i-iv, 1-149.

4901



BISHEN SINGH MAHENDRA PAL SINGH  
23-A, Connaught Place,

Printed by 100821-DEHRA DUN  
for Bishen Singh Mahendra Pal Singh 5891